

# **Storing the Fall Harvest**

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**Thanksgiving Point**



- **To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven . . . A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.**

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-2**



- **Know when to harvest produce. The quality of vegetables does not improve after harvest or during storage. Gather crops at their peak for flavor and nutrition.**



- **Garden produce picked too soon is too tender, and lacks substance and flavor. Picked too late, it is likely to be tough, fibrous or mushy, and also lacking in taste.**



- **The time for harvesting varies with climate, the particular season, variety, and the vegetables involved. For instance, tomatoes can be left on the vine until fully ripened or taken off when partially ripened.**



- **Other crops such as winter squash and watermelon are not ready until after they are fully developed.**



- **The “days to maturity” listings on seed packets and in gardening books and seed catalogs are helpful but not set in stone.**



- **Check the garden frequently for ripe produce during harvest time. Vegetables continue to grow. Before long, they may be overgrown. Pick and discard overgrown produce to encourage new production.**





- **When harvesting, avoid bruising or damaging the vegetables as it causes decay.**



# Storage

- **To store any vegetable successfully, consider**
  - **Temperature**
  - **Moisture**
  - **Ventilation**



# **Temperature:**

- **The conversion of sugar to starch is critical in products such as sweet corn and peas. It is necessary to cool these products immediately to minimize this change. If possible, harvest vegetables early in the morning or right before you intend to use them.**



# Moisture:

- **Proper humidity varies with commodities. Leafy-type vegetables require a high humidity (95 percent) whereas onions should be stored in a drier atmosphere, such as 65 to 70 percent relative humidity.**



# Ventilation:

- **Wilting and tissue breakdown are minimized by proper air circulation.**



# **Asparagus**

- **Harvest the third year after planting crowns, but do not harvest for more than one month the first time. In the following years, the spears may be harvested in May and June.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze.**



# Asparagus

- **Harvest spears 5 to 8 inches tall. Cutting may damage some spear tips that have not yet emerged from the ground. Snap by bending from the top toward the ground.**



# Asparagus

- **Asparagus deteriorates rapidly after harvest. If it is not eaten immediately, it should be processed or refrigerated.**
  - **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze.**





# Lima Beans





# **Lima Beans**

- **Pick lima beans when the pods are well-filled but before they turn yellow. Pod end should feel spongy. Keep cold and humid and use as soon as possible.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze, bottle, or dry.**



# **Snap Beans**

- **Harvest when pods are firm and snap readily, but before the pod becomes bulgy. Should be free from scars and without strings when snapped.**



# **Snap Beans**

- **Keep cold (45' to 50' F.) And humid and use as soon as possible. Washing before storage helps retain moisture content.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze, bottle, or dry.**



# Beets





# Beets

- **Harvest beets when they are 1 1/4 to 2 inches in diameter. The beet tops can also be eaten as greens. The leaves should be 4 to 6 inches long. Wash and refrigerate immediately.**



# Beets

- **Beets are usually bottled to preserve them, but they can be stored in sand or sawdust in the cellar like carrots.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze, bottle, common storage**



# Broccoli

- **Harvest when flower heads fully develop but before buds open. Cut 6 to 7 inches below flower heads. Store in cold section of the refrigerator. Harvest side shoots for later eating.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze**





# **Brussels Sprouts**

- **Pick or cut small sprouts when they are firm -- about 1 inch across. Pick the lower sprouts first and remove lower leaves to allow more sprouts to develop. Store in cold section of the refrigerator.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze**

# Cabbage





# Cabbage

- **Cut when heads are solid, but before they crack or split. Harvest a later crop of small heads or sprouts that develop on the stumps of the cut stems. The sprouts will be 2 to 4 inches in diameter and should be picked when they are firm. Store cabbage in crisper and use within 1 to 2 weeks.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze**



# Carrots





# Carrots

- **Harvest when young, crisp, and 1/2 to 1 inch in diameter or when desired size is achieved. Smaller carrots are more tender and sweeter than larger carrots. The sugar content is higher in mature carrots, but the younger ones are more tender. Carrots planted in the summer may be left in the ground until a killing frost.**



# Carrots

- **To store in ground, mulch with straw, leaves, etc., To keep the ground from freezing; dig carrots when needed. For convenience use bags of leaves or a board covered with leaves. The bags or board are easy to find even under snow.**
- **Just lift, dig, and replace the cover.**



# Carrots

- **Dig and cut off stem 2"-3". Store in a root cellar at 32- 40 degrees buried in sand or sawdust for moisture. Will keep in the vegetable crisper drawer in the refrigerator for several months.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): common storage, freeze, bottle**





# Cauliflower







# **Cauliflower**

- **Harvest before over mature. The heads are compact, firm, and white. To keep head white, tie the outer leaves together over the center of the plant as the head begins to form. Cauliflower will grow 6 to 8 inches in diameter and is ready for harvest 7 to 12 days after blanching. Chill immediately after harvest.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze**



# Celery

- **Cut when plants become 12 to 15 inches tall. While young and tender, remove the lowest leaves (8 to 10 inches long) from a few plants and use in salads, soups and cooked dishes. Wash and store in the refrigerator.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): common storage, freeze, bottle**



# Chard

- **Use the leaves as they become 8 to 10 inches long while they are still young and tender. New leaves will continue to grow from the center of the plant.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze**



# **Chinese cabbage**

- **Cut the entire plant at the ground line when the heads are compact and firm. Harvest before the seed stalks form in the early summer, and before freezing temperatures in the fall.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze**

# Corn





# Corn

- **Watch for signs of ripeness for earliest harvest. Corn silks darken and dry out as ears mature.**



# Corn

- **As kernels fill out toward the top, ends become more blunt instead of pointed. Pick sweet corn in the milk stage, when a milk-like juice exudes from kernels if crushed with a thumbnail.**



# Corn

- **Sweet corn is very susceptible to rapid sugar to starch conversion. Cook, eat or chill immediately after harvest.**





# Corn

- **For optimum flavor RUN to the nearest pot of boiling water as soon as picked.**
- **Better yet, take the cook stove to the garden, shuck the corn on the plant and dip it immediately into the boiling water!**



# Corn

- **To harvest, snap off the ears by hand with a quick, firm, downward push; then twist and pull. Corn is at its prime eating quality for only 72 hours before becoming overmature.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze, can or dry**



# Cucumbers

- **Harvest bright, firm and green fruits before they get too large.**
- **Cucumbers are past their prime if they are large, dull, puffy, and yellow. Remove old fruits from the vine so that young fruits will develop.**

# Cucumbers





# Cucumbers

- **A good rule of thumb:**
  - **Sweet pickles - 1 1/2 to 2 inches long;**
  - **Dills - 3 to 4 inches long, bright green in color and less crisp.**
  - **Do not try to pickle salad-type cucumbers**



# Cucumbers

- **Avoid yellowed cucumbers. Store in refrigerator 5 days.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): pickle**



# Eggplant

- **Harvest when the fruits are 6 to 8 inches long, glossy, uniformly deep colored - not overmature: dull, soft, and seedy. Cut fruit from plant leaving green calyx on fruit.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze**



# **Endive or escarole**

- **Cut the plants at the ground level when they are fully developed (10 to 12 inches across) and the center leaves have been blanched.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze or bottle**





# Garlic





# Garlic

- **Pull up the bulbs when the tops start to yellow and dry. Place the bulbs on screens to dry. When dry, trim the roots out close to the bulb, remove the loose outer sheaths, and store under cool, dry conditions.**
- **Leave green leaves attached and braid garlic heads together and hang for air circulation**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): dry or common storage**



# Gourd





# Gourd

- **Harvest edible varieties when fruits are 8 to 10 inches long, young and tender; harvest ornamental varieties when fruits are mature and fully colored but before first fall frost.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): dry or common storage**

# Greens





# **Greens**

- **There are many kinds, including collards, turnip greens, mustard greens, kale, swiss chard, beet greens, dandelions and others. Break off outer leaves when they are 6 to 10 inches long and before they start to yellow. Avoid wilted or flabby leaves. Wash and chill immediately.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze**





# **Jerusalem artichokes**

- **Dig the tubers anytime from september until after a frost, and in the spring before the new growth starts. Store in a cool place in damp sand or sawdust.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze or common storage.**



# Kale

- **Break off the outer leaves as they become 8 to 10 inches long. New leaves will continue to grow from the center of each plant.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze**





# Kohlrabi

- **The best time to harvest is when the bulbous part is 2 to 3 inches in diameter (size of a golf ball). Large, older kohlrabi is tough and woody and may have an off flavor. The young leaves can be cooked like spinach.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze**



# Leeks





# Leek

- **Harvest in late summer and fall by loosening the soil with a spading fork and pulling out the plant. Cut off the roots and all but 2 inches of the green leaves.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze**



# Lettuce

- **Leaf lettuce reaches maximum size in 50 to 60 days. Cut or pull the outer leaves (4 to 6 inches long) as you can use them. Butterhead varieties form small, loose heads that are ready in 60 to 70 days.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): not applicable**

# Melons



# Melons - Muskmelons





# Melons - Muskmelons

- **They develop their best flavor when they ripen in warm, dry weather. Lift the fruit and tug very gently. Stem of ripe melons should separate easily from the fruit. After harvesting, the fruit can be held at room temperature for 1 to 3 days until the blossom end softens.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): not applicable except some preserve recipes**



# Melons - Honeydew







# **Melons - Honeydew**

- **Harvest when yellowish to creamy white with a soft velvety feel. The rind should be slightly soft at the blossom end and have a faint, pleasant odor.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): not applicable except some preserve recipes**



# Melons - Watermelon

- **Ripeness**

- (1) lightogreen, and when the curled tendril near the stem begins to shrivel and dry up;
- (2) the surface color of the fruit turns dull;
- (3) the skin is rough and resists penetration by a thumbnail; and



# Melons - Watermelon

- **Watermelon ripeness**
  - (4) the bottom of a melon where it touches the ground turns from a light green to a yellowish color. Watermelons will not continue to ripen after harvest.
  - (5) thump melons with the palm of your hand. A ripe melon will sound like the sound you get when you thump your chest. An unripe melon sounds like your head and an overripe melon sounds like your stomach
  - **Ideal long-term storage method(s): not applicable except some preserve recipes**



# Mustard

- **Harvest the leaves when they are young and tender, about 6 to 8 inches long. In the summer, the leaves become tough and develop a strong flavor. Chill immediately.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze or bottle**



# Okra

- **The okra pods should be harvested while they are immature and still tender (2 to 3 inches long). The large pods become tough and woody. The pods must be picked at least every other day if you want the plants to remain productive. Chill immediately.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze or bottle**



# Onions





# Onions

- **Pull green onions when size is right green onions may be harvested when the tops are 6 inches high and the stem is the thickness of a pencil.**



# Onions

- **Leave bulb onions in the ground until the tops die. Harvest dry onions in late july or early august after most of the tops have fallen. When about a fourth to half the onions have fallen, push the rest over to hasten maturity. They should develop a leaf coat under the ground.**
- **Over-wintered bulb onions are ready to harvest in June.**





# Onions

- **Allow the bulbs to air dry for a day or two after digging. Spread in warm shady place to dry until skins are papery and roots are dry.**



# Onions

- **Best stored in mesh bags or nylon stockings in dry, well ventilated cool location (as low as 32f.)**



# Onions

- **Try storing in a nylon stocking. Drop onion into the toe, tie a knot, drop in the next, tie a knot, etc. Hang for air circulation. Complete drying or curing takes 2 to 3 week.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): common storage, chop and dry or freeze**



# Parsley

- **Cut when older leaves are 3 to 5 inches long. Continue to take outer leaves for fresh, tender parsley until heavy frosts of winter. Store in refrigerator.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): dry**



# **Parsnips**

- **Parsnips should be left in the ground until the tops freeze, since they are not fully flavored until after early frosts. The moderate sizes are best. Larger ones may be woody. If you do not have storage facilities, you can leave the roots in the ground and mulch them with straw so they can be dug up throughout the winter.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): common storage, freeze**



# Peas

- **Pod should be full and green with tender, sweet peas.**



# Peas

- **Harvest chinese and snow peas, which are eaten pod and all, when the pods are 1 1/2 to 2 inches long and the peas are about the size of bb's. The pods are usually picked 5 to 7 days after flowering.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze, dry or bottle**



# Peppers and Chilis







# Peppers and Chilis

- **Fruits may be harvested at any size, but they are usually picked when they are full grown and mature. They may be left on the plant to ripen fully to a red or yellow color, in which case they will be mellower and sweeter. Hot peppers, except jalapeno (which remains green when ripe), are usually harvested at the red ripe stage.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): dry, bottle or freeze**



# Potatoes





# Potatoes

- **New potatoes: dig before the vines die when tubers are 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 inches diameter**



# Potatoes

- **Large potatoes: potatoes store best if harvested after the vines die naturally or from frost. Use a spading fork. Dig 4 to 6 inches beneath the soil surface. Handle the tubers gently during harvest to avoid bruising. Use damaged potatoes first.**



# Potatoes

- **Let potatoes dry several hours in garden after digging. Do not expose potatoes to sunlight for any length of time. Remove adhering soil. Avoid washing unless covered with mud or heavy soil. Allow to air dry and cure for several days before storing.**



# Potatoes

- **Store in cool, dark, slightly moist area away from apples. Allow air circulation for best results**



# Potatoes

- **Store at about 40 degrees. If stored below 35 degrees, the starches in the potato metabolize into sugars, but aren't used up quickly. If stored above 50 degrees they will sprout.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): common storage, freeze, dry, bottle or**



# Pumpkins







# **Pumpkins**

- **Allow them to ripen fully on the vine, but pick them before the first heavy freeze. The fruit should have a deep, solid color and a hard rind. Cut pumpkins from the vine, leaving 3 to 4 inches of the stem attached. Pumpkins without stems do not store well. Store in a cool, dry area.**

# Radishes





# Radishes

- **For the best flavor, start thinning and eating radishes when they are the size of marbles. They will be good up to 1 inch in diameter. After that, they may become hot and pithy.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): not applicable**



# Rhubarb

- **Do not harvest the first year. Harvest only for 1 to 2 weeks the second year. Thereafter, stalks may be harvested for 8 to 10 weeks. To harvest, pull the leafstalks from the plant. Only the stem (petiole) is used, since the leaves contain large amounts of oxalic acid and should not be eaten.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze, bottle or dry**



# **Spinach**

- **Spinach may be harvested from the time the plants have 6 to 8 leaves until the seed stalk develops. For the best quality, cut while young. Cut the entire plant off at the soil surface. Wash leaves thoroughly and store in refrigerator.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze**

# Squash - Summer squash





# **Squash - Summer Squash**

- **Harvest while still young and tender - 6 to 8 inches in length and 1 1/2 to 2 inches in diameter. Glossy color indicates tenderness. Scallop squash are best while small, 3 to 4 inches in diameter and a grayish or greenish8white in color. Squash grown rapidly and are usually ready to pick 4 to 8 days after flowering.**



# **Squash - Winter Squash**

- **Harvest winter squash when fruit has a deep solid color and the rind is hard (no moisture in mark left by fingernail). Harvest after vines die down, but before first hard freeze.**
- **Harvest before a heavy frost. Light frost will not damage mature fruit. Cut squash from the vines carefully, leaving 1 to 2 inches of stem attached. Avoid cuts and bruises.**





# **Squash – Winter Squash**

- **Cure in a warm (75E- 85E F.), Dry place for 10 days. Then store in a cool (50E to 55E F.) Dry location. Inspect for soft spots occasionally.**
- **Can keep until early spring.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): common storage, freeze or bottle**



# **Sweet potatoes**

- **Harvest in the fall before frost kills the vine. Handle carefully when digging to avoid bruises. After digging, let the roots lie exposed for 2 or 3 hours to dry thoroughly, then put them in a warm room at 85 degrees F to cure for about 10 days. Store at 50 to 55 degrees F and 85 percent humidity.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): can, freeze, common storage**



# Tomatoes





# Tomatoes

- **For canning, fruit should be fully colored, but firm, not mushy. Fruits will continue to ripen when picked before they are fully ripe, but sugars do not develop as well as on vine.**



# Tomatoes

- **To store for fresh winter use, pick those that are mature but not ripe (light green, turning white), without cracks, nicks, bruises, or frozen parts. Store them in a cool, dark place to ripen. They will keep for a couple of months in the right conditions and longer if along keepers@ are the variety stored.**



# Tomatoes

- **Store without letting touch, on wire screen flats, one layer per flat, and stack the flats. The air can circulate discouraging microorganism growth; or wrap separately (it's hard to tell which ones are ripening) or layer them between sheets of newspaper at 50 to 60 degrees F in a dry place.**



# Tomatoes

- **If space is available plants may be uprooted at end of season and hung upside down in basement. Pick fruit as it ripens.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): bottle, fresh common storage, dry or freeze.**



# Turnips

- **Harvest when the roots are 2 to 3 inches in diameter. The tops can be used for greens when they are 4 to 6 inches long. Turnips can be left in the ground after a heavy freeze and mulched with straw for harvest during the early winter.**
- **Ideal long-term storage method(s): freeze**





# Turnips



# The End

